

# Tourism: Pros and Cons of Development of Chukotka

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Development of tourism in Chukotka is given more attention every year. At the same time as tourist destinations are developing, they are provoking apprehension as to the benefits for Chukotka and its inhabitants. That is why before discussing measures to enliven tourism in the region, the positive and negative sides of tourism development in Chukotka should be analyzed. Positive outcomes of tourism are well known, which is why this paper concentrates more attention on the possible negative effects of uncontrolled tourism development. The world tourism industry is becoming the second largest part of the world economy, but tourism development can cause ecological, cultural, and social problems, along with positive aspects.

Positive sides of tourism: increase in the budget of the region, increase in employment (in the service sector), support of native crafts and traditional culture, cultural education through tourism, and formation of a positive image of the region.

Negative sides of tourism: commercialization of cultures, danger of embezzlement, loss of cultural identity and destruction of cultural values, conflict between the local population and tourists over use of biological resources, increasing roles of unqualified work in the service sector, and ecological problems.

Despite successful realization of many tourism programs on Chukotka, in recent years there have been asso-

ciated hardships with the effects tourist activity. Currently cruises are the main type of tourism, but they have had an insignificant influence on the economy in the region. Many native villages in the Chukotka Autonomous Region are now in a depression. They have critical social problems: unemployment, low income, alcohol abuse, and lack of career options. These problems cause young people to migrate to cities. These difficult situations in the villages are worse where traditional ways (deer herding, sea trade, hunting) are decreasing. Here tourism must be good for the residents of villages and give support to the traditional ways. Considering the potential of recreational tourist activities, bordering territory residents could be guide consultants, look after the safety of cultural and natural objects, rent out accommodations, and could create small companies for participation in tourism programs.

For the tourism industry, culture is equally important as natural recreational resources. For tourism to be successful, development requires certain considerations for the uniqueness of objects of national and cultural heritage. Chukotka is rich in traditional culture. It has many folk tales of the people, archaeological sites, and native dance groups. Chukotka Peninsula, as part of Beringia, is one of the unique places in the world, where cultural resources are concentrated. Here tourism plays a positive role in saving archaeological sites, and coastal cultures provide support with national trade of bone carving and native dances. This is possible with proper administration of cultural resources and strict control in business as to insure the protection of cultural heritage; however, the real picture

may be less optimistic.

According to UNESCO, one of the main concerns regarding mass tourism for the native cultures of the world is the commercialization of culture, especially when the industry's top priority is to achieve maximum profits. This tends to be particularly destructive for the native people of the world. It is necessary to note, that a traditional way of life for the people of Chukotka, is transformed into a substitute of technocratic and traditional culture. It could be said that this is an inevitable process, but it is obvious that this causes people leading a nomadic way of life or engaged in sea hunting to diminish. How will ethnic tourism develop in this situation? Unregulated tourism will only strengthen the growth of behaviour deviations (e.g., the spread of drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.). This collision with aggressive commercial tourism can lead to undesirable consequences for reindeer breeders and sea hunters.

The positive role of tourism in this situation can be expressed in support of a traditional way of life. For example, in tourist programs it is necessary to include popular competitions among local residents, such as reindeer racing in the area of Anadyr (the villages of Lamutskoe, Chuvanskoe, and Vaegi) and in the area of Bilibino (the village of Omolon). In the seaside villages of the Chukchi Peninsula there are the well-known holidays "Whale Holiday" and "Beringia", where whaleboat competitions are conducted between hunters. The support from tourism is achieved by the support of such crafts as making of *yarar* drums, ski skins constructed from reindeer fur, *baidars* or kayaks made from poplar and leather, tailoring of fur

clothes, and sleeping bags.

Tourism is considered to promote the protection of the environment. One of the main concerns for tourism is the use of natural resources, therefore the protection of these resources is vital for the continued existence of the tourism industry. Mass tourism, which caused serious environmental problems, led to an alternative, environmentally and ecologically responsible tourism. This type of tourism, under competent management, brings a huge business incentive for the preservation of nature. This brought about specific varieties of tourism such as bird watching and wildlife viewing. In a number of western countries and some regions in Russia (Sakha-Yakutia Republic), the multilevel system of natural parks is being developed, which promotes this ecologically responsible tourism.

Chukotka's potential for the development of this kind of tourism is enormous—great tracts of mostly untouched land; unique Arctic flora and fauna; and the presence of rare species of birds, animals, and plants. But is “ecological tourism”, especially in such sensitive territory as the Arctic region, truly ecological in praxis? Poor management of tourism can cause significant damage to the environment of Chukotka. Among the cons in this instance:

1. A problem of debris and food waste. It is necessary to recognize, that Chukotka is polluted by dumps, heaps of garbage in part caused by sightseers. Because of the cold conditions of the region, the dump sites decompose at an extremely slow rate, making them an almost permanent feature in the permafrost. The accumulation of food waste in the territory attracts wild animals and instances of animal death due to cutting themselves or being poisoned at such sites have been recorded time and again.
2. The disturbance factor. Often tourists seek out encounters with wild animals, often resorting to dangerous ends to achieve this communion with nature. Such activity not only compels animals to leave, but also can provoke an attack. On the Chukchi peninsula, such factors stress the animal population.



Figure 1. Ergyron traditional music and dance ensemble.

Photograph courtesy of Vladimir Zhuravkov.

3. Trampling of vegetative cover. The unregulated flow of tourists frequently encroaches upon the environment of Chukotka. In the opinion of many experts on the northern issues (N.K. Zheleznov) the unregulated movements of tourists within the landscapes of the Chukotka Peninsula contribute to the development of erosive processes, such as the destruction of the soil layer or the vegetative cover and the formation of ravines.

Unregulated tourism is causing significant damage to the environment. For many countries of the world, uncontrolled collecting of rare geological minerals and fossils by tourists has become a critical problem. Chukotka is very rich with geological formations, a number of rare minerals, and especially fossilized remains of animals of the Pleistocene era—mammoths, woolly rhinoceroses, etc. In this situation, Chukotka is vulnerable to unscrupulous collecting. Irreplaceable losses occur as a result of the desire of many tourists to have a rare animal or bird “trophy”. Law enforcement organizations of the Chukotka Autonomous Region have already had to detain tourists, including a number of foreign citizens, who tried to remove rare birds of prey like the white gyrfalcon or the peregrine falcon to sell them in other countries. Also under threat are polar bears. Despite all the measures that have been implemented for their protection, their fur is still a prized commodity on the market.

In this way, if the development of the tourist industry in the region of Chukotka continues to mismanage commercial tourism, then the consequences of tourism pointed out above will be realized. Indeed, the degraded territories are of no value to the tourism industry.

In the last year, cardinal changes have occurred in the world tourism industry. The mass tourism is being replaced by the “demanding” client: he or she is educated, has substantial means, and requires the maximum returns from vacations, including those having a cultural and educational nature. Only large corporations with their own infrastructure have the means

of satisfying these demands. In particular, the merging of private airlines with tourist corporations has occurred. Currently 80% of profits are concentrated in a few leading transnational tourist corporations of the world. In this situation Russia can appear as an eternal outsider. In the opinion of Russia’s scientists (V.A. Kvartalnyi), to avoid becoming an outsider, Russia must pay more attention to social tourism, for commercial tourism is not capable of satisfying the requirements of the population of the region.

All mentioned above have a relationship to Chukotka. The overwhelming majority of the residents of Chukotka go as tourists to central Russia or abroad, spending considerable sums of money, which benefit other regions. The program for the development of domestic tourism is necessary for the Chukotka Autonomous Region. This not only promotes social-economic improvement of many depressed areas of Chukotka, but most importantly, will assist in the increased recognition of the nature and culture of the people of Chukotka. State and public support is necessary for the proper development of tourism and its real potential value, including such directions of social tourism as youth and sport tourism, and children’s camps with ecological and cultural programs. But to discuss problems of the development of tourism without paying attention to economic components is impossible. First of all, it is necessary to consider the organizational forms of tourism. In Anadyr and Provideniya, there are currently a number of tourist firms, created on the basis of private initiatives. On one hand, of course, this is good, but on the other hand this is a long and often unproductive path. I believe that I am not alone in my opinion, that at the given stage it is necessary to attract to the region the cooperation of large tourist firms of Russia, the United States (State of Alaska), Canada, and Scandinavia that possess sufficient staff, experience in Arctic tourism, and economic potential. I am confident that the traditions of friendship and cooperation between Chukotka and Alaska will successfully develop further, especially in the field of tourism.

Figure 2. (Right) Lavrentiya Bay.



Photograph courtesy of Mikhail Zelenky